



Media Release

Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

Public Affairs Office

36000 Darnall Loop

Fort Hood, Texas, 76544

Email Christie.Vanover@amedd.army.mil

Telephone (254) 286-7954

Web site: www.crdamc.amedd.army.mil

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Fort Hood breaks ground for new Army medical center

By Christie Vanover
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FORT HOOD, Texas – A ceremonial groundbreaking was held Dec. 13 for the new \$534 million Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center that will be constructed to replace the current 45-year-old building.

Officials from the Department of Defense, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Army Medical Command, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Fort Hood turned sand at the 70-acre site, signifying the start of the construction project.

“It’s been over 47 years since we broke ground on the initial hospital here, Darnall Army Community Hospital,” said Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker, U.S. Army surgeon general and commander, U.S. Army Medical Command.

“In the private sector, with the dynamism of health care today, we average a turnover of a major medical facility like this on the order of every 21-24 years. In Army medicine over the last two to three decades, because of an inability to invest in our infrastructure, we have been reduced to turning over our hospitals on a 40-50 year cycle,” he said.

At 947,000 square feet, the new medical center will be 60 percent larger than the current building and will include a six-story hospital tower, three out-patient specialty clinic buildings and three parking garages. It is the largest Department of Defense contract funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the stimulus package.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that approximately 1,000 workers will be on site at the peak of construction, many from local small businesses.

“The purpose of the Recovery Act was to preserve and create jobs for Americans, promoting economic recovery by investing in projects that would not just make work, but would move

America forward,” said the Honorable Mike McCord, principal deputy under secretary of defense (comptroller).

McCord, who led the Recovery Act program for the Department of Defense, represented President Barack Obama’s administration and the Department of Defense at the groundbreaking ceremony.

“Across the department, we have funded more than 80 construction projects and more than 4,400 repair and renovation projects for DoD facilities. I am most proud of these two new hospitals, here and at Camp Pendleton, not just because they’re our two largest Recovery Act projects, but because they will benefit more people than any of our other projects,” he said.

“It will provide a quarter of a million people in the Fort Hood community with a state-of-the-art facility that is able to supply them with the care they need and deserve,” he added.

While the current hospital has provided that care for decades, it reached a milestone in 2006, when it was redesignated as a medical center.

Col. (Dr.) Steven Braverman, the medical center’s commander, said over the past four years, they’ve increased medical education programs, added more partnerships with research and academic institutions and expanded medical care, especially in the areas of behavioral health and traumatic brain injury.

“While this facility will serve as the capstone of that transformation from a MEDDAC [Medical Department Activity] to a medical center,” he said, “it’s really about the people. It’s really about the outstanding medical staff that we have and the Soldiers, families and retirees and their families in the local community at Fort Hood and the surrounding areas whom we serve.”

“It gives us the opportunity to mold together a top-notch staff, superb medical care and a brand new, state-of-the-art medical facility, and I can’t think of a better way to continue to meet our goal of inspiring trust in Army medicine,” he said.

Braverman said Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center serves as a hub to the network of care provided through a series of clinics in and around Fort Hood. The Surgeon General echoed those remarks.

“Today, we stand on this cold, hard ground of an empty field. In 2015, this site will be Fort Hood’s home for Army medicine—the hub of the medical network that’s designed to promote health and to deliver world class health care,” said Schoomaker.

“This medical center isn’t the only commitment that we’re making to Fort Hood,” he added.

“While the tractors are turning the dirt here, we’re deeply involved in the next phase of increasing access to care. Within the next six months, we’ll have three community-based primary

care clinics, opening in Killeen, Harker Heights and Copperas Cove, moving health care closer to where families live and work.”

Schoomaker thanked Congress, and specifically, U.S. Representatives Chet Edwards and John Carter for “passionately and effectively” advocating for the new medical center.

“Their support, combined with that of the president and the Department of Defense, demonstrates the nation’s commitment to an investment in military health.”

Carter who represents the 31st District of Texas said he’s met with wounded Soldiers across the globe, and they all have told him they want to heal and return to their units. He said it’s because of those dedicated Soldiers that he fought hard for this military construction project.

“We’re going to be watching as it [the medical center] springs up out of the prairie of Texas, and we’re all going to be very proud of what is going to be available for those young fighting men and women that we owe so much to,” he said.

Although the crowd offered a standing ovation to Edwards for his commitment to this project, the Congressman who represents the 17th District of Texas, humbly said it was a team effort that will make a difference in the lives of thousands of Soldiers and their families for decades to come.

“I believe our nation has a moral obligation to respect our service men and women and their families, not just with our words, but with our deeds, fulfilling that morale responsibility is what this new hospital is all about,” he said.

Construction will officially begin in the spring and the Army Corps of Engineers projects that the new Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center will open for patient care in the summer of 2015.